



South Salt Creek Neighborhood Focus Area Action Plan

Introduction

An important neighborhood revitalization strategy in the City of Lincoln concentrates resources in small areas (12 to 30 blocks) called Focus Areas. This strategy was developed to achieve significant results in 3 to 5 years, encourage private investment and increase confidence in the area.

To become a Focus Area, a neighborhood must:

- be located in a low and moderate income area,
- show signs of decline such as deterioration of housing or public facilities,
- have a neighborhood association that wants to have a Focus Area and that is committed to working with the city to make improvements,
- be a visible area, near busy streets, public institutions (such as schools) or commercial areas, and
- be identified as an area of concern by other city departments.

Current Focus Areas all surround Lincoln's downtown and are in parts of the Everett, Near South, Woods Park, Downtown, Malone, and South Salt Creek neighborhoods.

In all Focus Areas, neighborhood committees worked with the City's Urban Development Department staff to identify issues and develop goals and strategies. These are summarized in an Action Plan for each area, a "blueprint" for revitalization for the next 3 to 5 years. A group of city staff, called the Focus Area Concept Team (FACTeam) included Public Works and Utilities, Building and Safety, Planning, Parks and Recreation, Health, Police and Urban Development. The FACTeam, like the neighborhood committees, also worked together to identify issues in these areas and to develop programs and strategies to improve the neighborhoods. The FACTeam brings additional perspectives and resources to the revitalization of the Focus Areas.

The strategies for the South Salt Creek neighborhood, including a map, are presented on the last three pages of this Focus Area Action Plan. The neighborhood association, working with the City's FACTeam will continue to have a major role in implementing the Action Plan.



Houses on 8th Street east of Cooper Park, between "D" & "E" Streets.

Acknowledgements

The South Salt Creek Neighborhood Association, the committee for the development of the Focus Area Plan, residents in the Focus Area who provided their input, and the City of Lincoln Focus Area Concept Team [or FACTeam].

December, 1997



The historic Frieden's Lutheran Church at 540 "D"

Neighborhood History

The original plat of Lincoln in 1867 included 100 blocks within the South Salt Creek Neighborhood, over 40 percent of the original city. The first park in the city - Cooper Park (originally called Lincoln Park) is located here. Substantial residential development began in the 1880s with the arrival of large numbers of Germans from Russia. They were attracted by proximity to the rail yards and industries, and the growing ethnic community. Early floods from Salt Creek caused real estate values to stay low, contributing to the area's desirability for new immigrants. Other ethnic groups have also settled in South Salt Creek including immigrants from the Ukraine, Czechoslovakia, and more recently, a sizeable Hispanic population.

The neighborhood encompasses the South Bottoms Historic District. It was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1986 because of its significance in ethnic history, as the Midwest's largest urban enclave of Germans from Russia (Lincoln's largest immigrant group) and on the basis of its significance in architecture, displaying the strong influences of immigrants. Its greatest strength is the uninterrupted blocks of early houses.



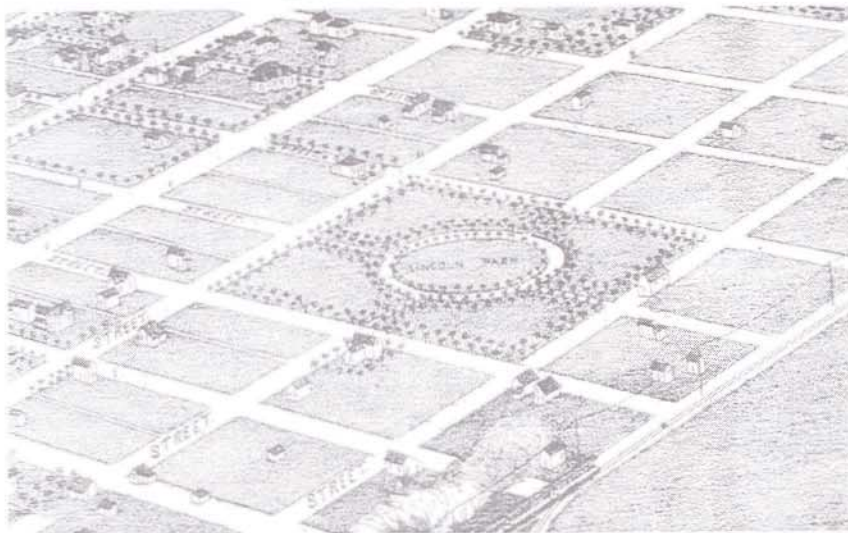
William Tyler House at 8th & "D" Streets is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Several factors that influenced the decision by early immigrants to locate here are still present today: the location of the railroads, the flood plain, availability of affordable housing, and mixed land uses. Many immigrants still settle in the neighborhood although they tend to move out as their economic conditions improve. The location of the railroad tracks through the neighborhood, the proximity to South Salt Creek, and the mixed land uses, once viewed as assets, have become liabilities from the perspective of neighborhood residents. The railroad tracks create train/vehicle-pedestrian conflicts while living in the flood plain restricts redevelopment and causes increased costs to property owners for flood insurance. Mixed land uses have resulted in blighting conditions due to the deterioration of structures and lack of buffers.

Settlement by ethnic groups has resulted in a strong sense of community identity. The close ties of residents to their families and churches has always been a major strength of the neighborhood. A source of pride in the neighborhood is that it has become more ethnically mixed, multi-cultural, and economically diverse. Residents have developed a mutual respect for diverse incomes and cultures.

Focus Area Profile

The South Salt Creek Focus Area consists of a four by five block area bounded by "J" Street on the north, "D" Street on the south, 9th Street on the east, and 5th Street on the west. Centered around the two blocks containing Park Middle School and Cooper Park, the focus area contains a variety of land uses, including residential, commercial, industrial, educational, and recreational. The entire area, from



1880 image of then Lincoln, now Cooper Park. Photo courtesy of Lincoln-Lancaster Planning Dept.

"G" Street south, is located in the original plat of Lincoln and the majority of the area is contained within the National Register-listed South Bottoms Historic District. Also located here is the William Tyler House, which is individually listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

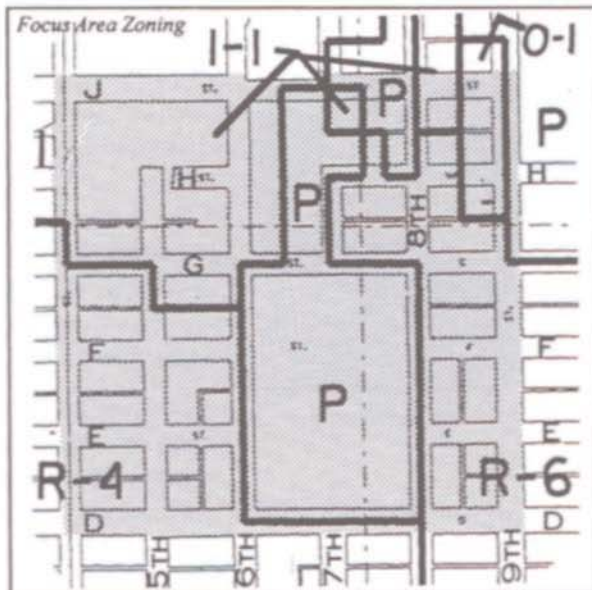
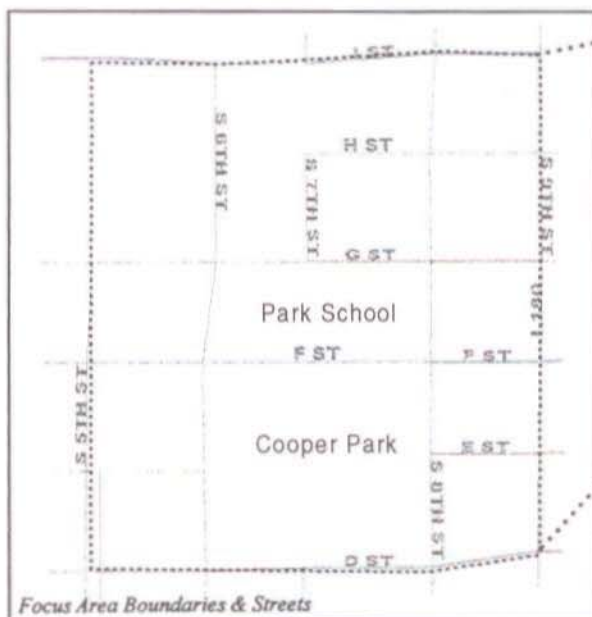
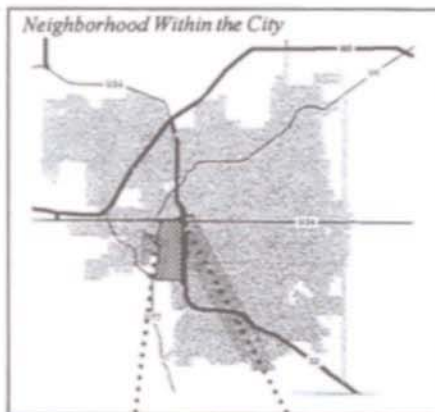
In addition, the area east of 5th Street, almost to 7th Street, is situated in the flood plain. Both the Historic District and the flood plain designations result in additional requirements for development and revitalization activities.

Zoning and Land Use

Zoning reflects the transitional nature of the focus area: to the west and south of Cooper Park, zoning is R-4 low-medium density residential. Moderately high residential density, R-6, is located east and approximately one block north of Park Middle School. Further north is a combination of I-1 industrial zoning and public. The half block west of ninth between "G" and "J" Streets is O-1, a district for redeveloping office uses in the general area of the County-City Building and the State Capitol Building. Cooper Park and Park Middle School represent a sizable amount of the public zoning.

Consistent with zoning, land use surrounding Cooper Park on the east, west, and south is primarily single family residential. This area is the most stable in terms of land use with few land use conflicts. North of Park Middle School is a mixture of uses: single family, multiple family, commercial, office and industrial. Closer to "J" Street land use becomes almost exclusively commercial/industrial. Commercial, industrial, and office uses serve a broad area and cannot be classified as neighborhood use.

The Neighborhood Association is supportive of the commercial and industrial businesses in the neighborhood. However, the condition of many of the commercial and industrial properties in the focus area is a primary issue for the neighborhood. Many of these land uses were "grandfathered" when the zoning ordinance took effect; as a result, they are not required to meet screening and buffering standards established in the zoning ordinance. In general, buffers be-



Houses west of Cooper Park on 6th Street.

South Salt Creek At-A-Glance

	City	South Salt Creek	Focus Area
Population	191,972	3,060	494
% Minority	5.2	13.3	NA
% Hispanic	1.2	9.0	NA
Median Age	30.3	30.0	NA
Households (HH)	75,402	1,251	184
Occupied Housing Units	75,803	1,199	195
% Owner-Occupied	58.4	53.7	41.0
% Owners in Home 5+ Years	63.4	68.2	NA
Median Household Income	\$28,186	\$21,529	\$19,028*
Median Home Value	\$61,600	\$34,800	\$34,200*
Median Gross Rent	\$379	\$337	\$285*
% Units Built Before 1940	20.2	56.5	60.0

* Block Group data, includes an area larger than the Focus Area.

NA = Not Available

Source: 1990 Census

tween land uses are non-existent, causing land use conflicts.

The neighborhood is particularly concerned about the blighting influence of seemingly vacant commercial structures across the street to the north of the school. Given the deteriorated condition of the northern focus area and its proximity to the Haymarket (just four blocks north), the Neighborhood Association views this area as prime for redevelopment and a natural extension of Haymarket. Pursuing this redevelopment and the expansion of Haymarket into the area is one of their goals.

While the City's housing code contains a housing maintenance ordinance that addresses on-going maintenance issues for residential areas (such as paint, debris and junk), the building code does not contain similar requirements for commercial and industrial uses. The lack of maintenance standards for these older commercial/industrial areas has contributed to deteriorating physical conditions, unsightly and unkempt sites, and an overall blighting influence on the neighborhood.

Demographics

Neighborhood Trends

Characteristic	1970	1980	1990
Population	2,157	1,977	2,048
Total Housing Units	852	943	933
% Owner-Occupancy	58.5%	53.1%	50.8%
% Renter-Occupancy	41.5%	46.9%	49.2%
Single Family Units	NA	682	640

The population in the focus area is 494 which represents 16% of the neighborhood's total population. Although the percentage of minority and Hispanic people living in the Focus Area is not available, the population in the entire neighborhood is 13.3% minority and 9% Hispanic. Both of these percentages are significantly higher than the City percentages. Of the 195 housing units 128 (66%) are single family. Owner-occupancy is significantly lower than the city and neighborhood: 41% in the focus area compared to 58% in the city and the neighborhood's average of 54%. Just over half (51%) of the single family housing is rental.

The housing stock is modestly priced and old: 60% of housing units were built prior to 1939. This is a much greater percentage than the city's 20% and slightly

higher than the neighborhood's 57%. Housing values in 1990 were significantly lower than the city median; \$34,200 compared to the city's median value of \$61,600; and about the same as the neighborhood's median value of \$34,800.

Households in the focus area have lower incomes than the city or the neighborhood as a whole. Over half the people living in the focus area (53%) are low and moderate income (defined as less than 80% of the city median income) and slightly over one-fourth (25.5%) had incomes of less than 50% of the city median. In 1990, 11% of focus area households received some form of public assistance, compared to 4.5% in the city.

Trends in the neighborhood include decreasing home ownership with a corresponding increase in rental occupancy. The overall number of housing

units has increased since 1970, while single family units have decreased, illustrating that single family homes have been removed and replaced with apartment units. The neighborhood's population has fluctuated somewhat in the last 20



Southern facade of Park Middle School in the background, playground at Cooper Park in the foreground.

years, decreasing 8% between 1970 and 1980 and then increasing by 4% between 1980 and 1990. These population fluctuations are usually due to smaller family sizes and, considering the increase in rental units, fewer families and more one and two person households. Although these trends are based on census data for the entire neighborhood, they are most likely representative of the Focus Area as well, particularly since most multiple units in the neighborhood are located in the Focus Area.

Housing Conditions

In the summer of 1997, the City's Urban Development Department conducted a Housing Condition Survey of the focus area neighborhoods. In the South Salt Creek focus area, the greatest percentage of housing, 53 structures (46.1%) are in the "fair to good" category. Approximately 33% (38 structures) are in the "fair to poor" and "poor" categories. However, of those 38 structures, 28 (74%) are investor-owned. All but two of the investor-owned properties in these categories are single family houses. In the "good" category, 10 of the 12 investor-owner structures contain 4 or more units. In view of the age and value of housing in the focus area, and the modest incomes of the residents, it is probable that there are some cases of deferred maintenance that need to be addressed. A more significant issue, however, is the deterioration of single-family rental properties.

Housing Condition Survey Summer, 1997						
Condition	Owner-Occupied		Investor-Owned		Total	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Excellent	0	0	0	0	0	0
Good	12	21.0	12	21.0	24	20.9
Good to Fair	34	61.0	19	32.0	53	46.1
Fair to Poor	6	11.0	22	37.0	28	24.3
Poor	4	7.0	6	10.0	10	8.7
Dilapidated	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	56	100.0	59	100.0	115	100.0

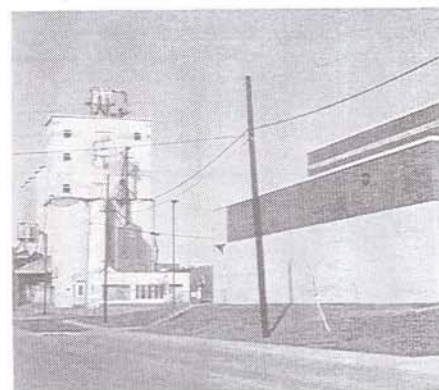
Source: 1997 Housing Condition Survey, Urban Development Dept.

Assets

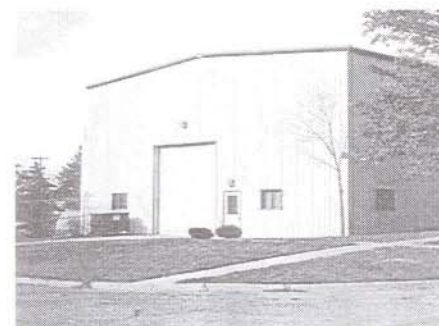
- ◆ Cooper Park.
- ◆ Park Middle School.
- ◆ Affordable housing.
- ◆ Convenient location - near the Haymarket, downtown, UNL City Campus, government offices.
- ◆ Neighborhood Association and residents committed to neighborhood's revitalization.
- ◆ Historic significance of the area south of "G" Street
- ◆ Potential to easily tie into the Haymarket, if redevelopment activities occur between "G" and "M" streets.
- ◆ Vacant commercial structures north of Park Middle School provide redevelopment opportunities for affordable housing to provide transition to commercial areas to the north.

Challenges

- ◆ Condition of commercial and industrial property and sites. Environmental blight caused by these conditions.
- ◆ Lack of buffers between commercial/industrial and residential uses creating land use conflicts.
- ◆ Deteriorating infrastructure; particularly streets, sidewalks, and alleys.
- ◆ Deferred maintenance of housing stock.
- ◆ Deteriorated condition of single family rental units.
- ◆ Flood plain regulations place constraints on housing rehabilitation in areas west of 7th Street.



Industrial uses just north of Park Middle School, view from 6th & "E" Streets.



Well-maintained industrial structure at 8th & "H" Streets.



Looking east from 7th & "G" Street; an example of mixture of uses.

South Salt Creek

Commercial Goals	Actions	Schedule	Implementation
Improve condition of commercial and industrial structures and sites	Complete Condition Survey of commercial, and industrial properties and sites	1997-1998	Neighborhood Assn
	Approach building owners to encourage maintenance before major maintenance is needed and encourage voluntary clean up	1997-1998	Neighborhood Assn
	If voluntary efforts are not successful, urge creation of maintenance ordinance (similar to Quality of Life Ordinance) for grandfathered commercial/industrial buildings and including site conditions	1998-1999	Neighborhood Assn

Land Use Goals	Actions	Schedule	Implementation
Reduce land use conflicts	If businesses willing to participate, create buffer program to screen commercial/industrial sites	1998-1999	Neighborhood Assn, Urban Development
	Study area north of Park Middle School for possible redevelopment project, transition zone to commercial area to the north	1998-1999	Urban Development
	Study area north to "M" Street for possible redevelopment, to tie into the Haymarket	1999	Urban Development

Residential Goals	Actions	Schedule	Implementation
Rehabilitate the existing housing stock	Provide funding for the major rehabilitation of 4 owner occupied dwellings and 7 rental units	1997-2000	Urban Development
	Provide funding for the minor rehabilitation of 12 owner occupied dwellings and 5 rental units	1997-2000	Urban Development
Increase the number of owner occupied dwellings	Encourage investor owners to sell to owner occupants and provide funding for the purchase and rehabilitation of 5 single family rental units by owner occupants	1997-2000	Urban Development
	Develop a marketing/promotional package to encourage home buyers to purchase in the area	1997-2000	Urban Development
Ensure that City's Minimum Housing Code is met	Evaluate existing housing stock to determine substandard conditions. Make appropriate referrals.	1997-1998	Urban Development, Building and Safety
Assist with improvement of residential exterior sites	Provide funding for removal of dangerous secondary structures and trees	1997-2000	Urban Development
Protect and preserve the character of residential areas	Explore implementation of design standards and conservation district	1998-2000	Urban Development, Neighborhood Assn

Parking Goals	Actions	Schedule	Implementation
Improve parking	Complete parking study to address patrons and employees of City County Building parking in residential areas	1998	Public Works
	Study parking issues on 6th Street, recommend improvements	1998	Public Works
	Study parking issues on "D" Street, 9th to 2nd, recommend improvements	1998	Public Works

Focus Area Strategies

Environmental Goals	Actions	Schedule	Implementation
Clear alleys and other public r.o.w. of overgrown vegetation, volunteer trees, etc.	Expand Residential Weed ordinance to include volunteer trees	1999-2000	County Weed Control Authority, FACTeam
Abate solid waste problems including junk cars, garbage, litter, porch couches, junk tires, etc.	Establish amnesty days for junk cars, other solid waste	1998-1999	FACTeam, Neighborhood Assn
	Establish litter clean up and prevention program	1998-1999	Clean Communities (Health Dept.)
	Establish summer youth clean-up teams	1998-2000	Neighborhood Assn, JTPA
	Establish ordinance requiring garbage service for all rental properties	1997-2000	FACTeam
Improve landscaping in residential areas	Encourage landscaping of slip-ins	1997-2000	Neighborhood Assn
	Develop landscaping program for private property	1999-2000	Neighborhood Assn, Urban Development
Remove, replace and trim street trees	Work with parks and rec department to establish types of trees and replacement schedule; tree trimming schedule	1998-2000	Parks and Rec
Remove dead trees or trim dead limbs from trees on private property and in R.O.W.	Provide financial assistance to property owners for tree management/maintenance activities	1997-2000	Urban Development
	Survey tree conditions in R.O.W., trim where needed	1998-2000	Neighborhood Assn, Parks and Recreation

Infrastructure Goals	Actions	Schedule	Implementation
Improve deteriorated sidewalks	Complete survey of sidewalks then repair and replace sidewalks.	1997-1998	Public Works, Urban Dev, Neighborhood Assn
Improve deteriorated alley surfaces	Complete survey of alleyways and complete repairs	1997-1998	Public Works, Urban Dev, Neighborhood Assn
Improve curbs and gutters	Complete survey of curb and gutter conditions and complete repairs	1998-2000	Public Works, Urban Dev, Neighborhood Assn
Improve deteriorated streets	Complete survey of street conditions and complete repairs	1998-2000	Public Works, Urban Dev, Neighborhood Assn

Crime & Security Goals	Actions	Schedule	Implementation
Improve the security of the residents and properties in the focus area	Assess lighting needs for apartment parking areas, alleys, and sidewalks, and make appropriate recommendations/requests for additional street lighting	1998	LES, FACTeam
	Assess effectiveness of ordinance requiring non-intrusive lighting in parking lots	1999	FACTeam
	Explore feasibility of installing pedestrian lighting on private property	1998	Urban Development

South Salt Creek Focus Area Strategies

Improve conditions of commercial & industrial structures & sites

Study parking issues on 6th Street

Reduce land use conflicts

Increase owner-occupancy

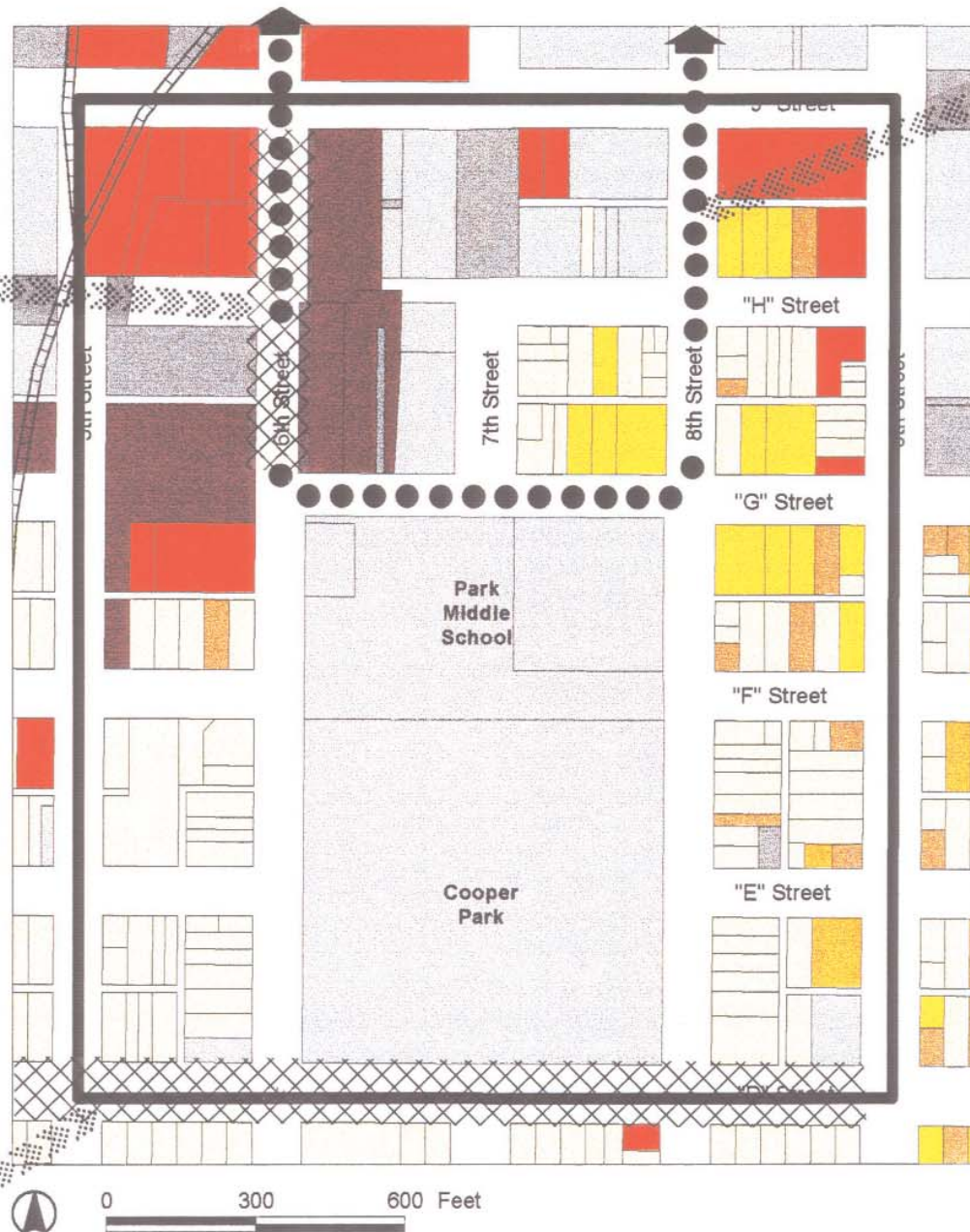
Improve parking, studying impact of adjacent land uses

Clear alleys & other public r.o.w. of overgrown vegetation

Rehabilitate existing housing stock and sites, using City Code if necessary

Study parking issues on "D" Street

Abate junk & litter problems



Study area north of Park School for possible redevelopment &, further north, for possible tie into the Haymarket area

Trim, remove, replace trees in public r.o.w.

Trim or remove dead or damaged trees on private property

Improve deteriorated infrastructure -- survey, replace & repair as needed

Improve security by assessing lighting needs & ordinances, exploring possibilities of pedestrian lighting

Improve landscaping in residential areas

Protect & preserve character of residential area

Focus Area Boundary
Commercial
Industrial
Public and Semi-Public
No Land Use Information Available

Single Family Residential
Townhouses
Multi-Family Residential
Duplexes
Houses Converted to Apartments
Fraternity/Sorority
Condominium